

INTRO

- (My health update praise)
- End of church year, Reign of Christ Sunday, Next week starts advent season
- Wrapping up our journey through Acts, Acts 13

CONCERN OF LATE: on the WRONG SIDE and an UNLIKELY

- My actions may be seen as on the Wrong side of faith and society
- Received encouragement from a Friend, not a believer, sees me modeling what the Bible says (better than “Christians”) and the true heart in society (not what may be happening at large in society)
- Ok to NOT be seen as doing it “right”, when I am really doing right
- And this feeling that I am so not the one to be doing what I’m doing (my background and current circumstances don’t seem like a natural fit for the bold ways in which God is leading me to live out my faith)
- This is the lense in which I read Acts 13

PAUL on the WRONG SIDE & an UNLIKELY

SENDING & TWO EXPERIENCES that shape them

BEING SENT from Antioch (in Syria)

- (Those sending/encouraging: a diverse group of prophets and teachers that were praying and fasting in beginning of Acts 13 (vs 1-3)
 - Acts 13:1-3 NCV
[1]In the church at Antioch there were these prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (also called Niger), Lucius (from the city of Cyrene), Manaen (who had grown up with Herod, the ruler), and Saul. [2] They were all worshiping the Lord and fasting for a certain time. During this time the Holy Spirit said to them, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to do a special work for which I have chosen them.” [3] So after they fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul and sent them out.
 - ***They were listening and following the Holy Spirit and blessing them

FIRST EXPERIENCE (To Island of Cyprus (Barnabas’ home))

- proconsul, Sergius Paulus wanted to hear about God (v6-12)
- Sergius’ Companion, Elymas, tried to dissuade him. Saul confronted Elymas. Sergius believed in Jesus

SECOND EXPERIENCE (To Perga & Antioch of Pisidia (in Turkey)) (vs 13-)

- People were enthusiastic/wanted to hear more of the teaching about Jesus.
- Religious group not wanting to follow the way of Jesus, really felt like their position of authority was challenged (jealously) so they made up a false narrative of the work of Paul
 - **Paul declares their purpose,,their intentions, focus... to be a light VS 47**
 - **47 For this is what Christ instructed us to do: 'I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'"**
 - **Acts 1:8 NCV**
[8] But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will receive power. You will be my witnesses—in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world." –Jesus to his followers
- Vs 50-52, the chapter closes with persecution against Paul and Barnabas, being driven out of the region they had been ministering in
 - **VS 52 And the Disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit**
 - *****When Rejected they stayed filled with joy and continued on their calling**

THE UNLIKELIES, CHOSEN

- Barnabas invites in Saul/Paul (previously persecuting the early believers, followers of the way of Jesus, revelation of Jesus, believed and wanted to tell others)
- Barnabas invites in John Mark (Went on a missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas, Abandoned them, disagreement, later went on to help Barnabas, and eventually Paul too found him helpful, credited for writing the gospel of Mark) (vs 13 left them)
 - Possible reasons for John Mark's departure: Immaturity and discouragement from Physical and cultural hardship, fear: The first missionary journey was difficult, with travel, unfamiliar territory, persecution

BIBLICAL UNLIKELIES: Those that became part of redemption /salvation stories for those around them

- **elderly man on the run for murder-Moses 80 freeing his people from slavery in Egypt**

- **Orphan girl being raised by her uncle**-Esther becomes queen and savior to her people
- **An old infertile couple**- Simeon and Elizabeth being able to conceive **John**, who himself grew up rather odd living in the desert and eating locusts and honey...but pointing people to the need for confession/repentance and preparing their hearts for Jesus
- **A boy defined not of wealth, son of a carpenter, not from the right town, had periods of living in exile and times without a home**-Jesus: tells people the hope and healing that God offers...ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of the people he encountered, ultimately made the way for everyone to have restored relationship with God now and eternal life with God

WICKED

- Felt drawn to see Wicked part 1, 2024 and Wicked for good, in theaters now.
 - Based on the 2003 Broadway Musical, which is based off a 1995 Book by Gregory Maguire. An alternate story of the Wizard of Oz story.
 - The Wizard of Oz movie 1939 based off the book The Wonderful Wizard of Oz 1900 L. Frank Baum of a story of a girl from Kansas, Dorothy, whose house gets caught up in a tornado and dropped into this magical land of Oz. Dorothy is depicted as a hero killing the “wicked witch of the West”
 - Wicked flips the story around to tell a version with the “wicked witch” not wicked at all and the propaganda that was telling that narrative. She rather was working to free the animals (that had once worked and lived among them with the ability to talk) that the Wizard had captured and enslaved to create the yellow brick road.
 - Encourage you to watch it. Although difficult to watch, depicts well the mistreatment of a group of people. Good depiction of characters choosing how they will treat each other, if they will stand up and do anything, if they will risk everything for the good even if labeled evil.

STORY OF ELPHABA, on the WRONG SIDE and an UNLIKELY HERO

- A girl with green skin that was mocked growing up, judged because she didn't look like everyone else. she was not wicked, but a hero being mislabeled/judged.
- Elphaba—An unlikely hero, part of a redemption/salvation story for animals
 - Leaves life of privilege to do what she feels must be done (friend tells her she can still have all she's worked for and ever wanted if she just stops defying the wizard)

(Elphaba, From Wicked)

BUT I DON'T WANT IT--

NO-- I CAN'T WANT IT
ANYMORE...
SOMETHING HAS CHANGED WITHIN ME
SOMETHING IS NOT THE SAME
I'M THROUGH WITH PLAYING BY THE RULES OF
SOMEONE ELSE'S GAME
I'M THROUGH ACCEPTING LIMITS
'CAUSE SOMEONE SAYS THEY'RE SO
SOME THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE BUT TILL I TRY,
I'LL NEVER KNOW
TOO LONG I'VE BEEN AFRAID OF
LOSING LOVE I GUESS I'VE LOST

- Elphaba tried to convince others to stand up to the wizard too for equality of the animals in Oz

(Elphaba, from Wicked for Good)

When you feel you can't fight anymore
Just tell yourself
There's no place like home
When you feel it's not worth fighting for
Compel yourself because
There's no place like home
When you want to leave discouraged and resigned
That's what they want you to do
But think how you'll grieve for all you'll leave behind
Oz belongs to you too

OUR STORY on the WRONG SIDE and THE UNLIKELIES, CHOSEN

- Paul and Barnabas were willing to stand up and speak out even though they knew it would mean persecution
- Elphaba was willing to become an enemy of the empire of Oz in order to speak out for the equality the animals
- Are we willing to speak out about Jesus and to speak up for those that have no one to speak for them
 - Living a counter-cultural life: may face propaganda against us, persecution. Are we willing to do this to be an unlikely hero
 - Are you willing to give up your rights, privileges, maybe your own life in working to bring justice and salvation to others?
- OUR RESPONSE
 - Become informed about the work of the NCF in family fund, reparations, housing a family shelter
 - Giving to the thanksgiving offering: Supporting the Wesley Food Pantry and services for immigrants

- Learning more about the ministries we support locally, nationally, globally to better pray, encourage, support participate
- Prayer opportunity now and in the red chairs during communion
- PRAYER FOR STRENGTH AND JOY

Colossians 1:11-12 MSG

“[I] pray that [we]’ll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us.” Amen